TL4445

A Solution for East Timor

Paper for conference -- 'Indonesia After Suharto' -- organised by the New Zealand Asia Institute of the University of Auckland, 10th September, 1998

By Commander Xanana Gusmão
President of the National Council of Timorese Resistance (CNRT)

Read bt Virgílio Guterres da Silva
East Timor

Ladies and Gentlemen! Friends of Peace and Justice!
I start by expressing my gratitude to the New Zealand Asia Institute of the University of Auckland, and to Oxfam, for allowing me to address this distinguished audience on an issue deeply affecting the life of a small nation, the life of the East Timorese people, my people, who have been searching for peace for the last 23 years. Even if I am unable to be physically with you, I am so in spirit.

Democratisation and Real Peace
At this decisive time in the history of East Timor, and of Indonesia, the East Timorese people strongly hope that the reform process in Indonesia will bring about true democratisation, where justice will prevail over repression. Only then can people free themselves from the force of persecution and constant intimidation, and give prominence to the notion of Right, in their conscience and in their interactions with others.

We have been deprived, as have many in Indonesia, of the right to live peacefully as a nation and a people. We have been deprived of the right to act freely. We have, instead, been subjected to a horrifying reign of violence and military crime. So what do we yearn for now? Ladies and Gentlemen - we yearn for peace.

Real peace means peace of the spirit. This peace of the spirit can only flourish when repression and fear do not threaten, and when law prevails over governments. The reform process currently underway in Indonesia will have to include this dimension and give back this inner peace to the hearts of Indonesians and East Timorese.

Peace of the spirit demands that new approaches are required when looking for a solution to the question of East Timor. The spirit of reform, growing in Indonesia, must also be applied to the East Timor issue. The new Indonesian government must demonstrate, not just a shift of direction, but a real change of heart, from the old arrogance, lies, corruption and use of force. Peace is not just political, but is also spiritual.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

Time is with the resisters
Since that terrible day in December 1975, it has been very clear to the East Timorese people that they have been facing a powerful neighbour armed by powerful friends. In spite of the

enormous imbalance of forces, our confidence in our capacity to resist on our own was strengthened by the conviction that the colonial regime of President Soeharto would one day succumb to the natural law of evolution. History illustrated this, so our catchcry of "To resist is to win" also became our conviction. Time, we were sure, was with us.

Meanwhile in Jakarta Soeharto was convinced that time was on HIS side, for all the machinery of terror and money to corrupt - the only weapons he knew - were in his hands. People's conscience and moral strength were factors that President Soeharto did not understand. Happily, during these last 6 months, it is the conscience and moral strength of Indonesians themselves which is coming to our aid. It seems that time IS on our side.

Change is coming

It is common knowledge that the occupation of East Timor has been, indeed still is, very lucrative for members of the Soeharto family and some Indonesian generals. Income has been substantial. However expenditure is also substantial, and with the economic crisis, is becoming a huge burden. Military analysts estimate that over ½ billion US dollars are spent on direct military costs per year in East Timor. Indonesia now realises that costs must be cut, but equally that their face must be saved. So what is their strategy?

Autonomy or independence?

As part of Jakarta's decentralisation strategy for the provinces, the Indonesia government is offering East Timor a "wide ranging" autonomy. This could be regarded as an important concession by the new government, however such autonomy is only acceptable as a transitional phase in the journey towards a referendum and not as an end in itself. Moreover, it should not imply recognition of the illegal annexation of East Timor by Indonesia in 1976. It should not assume Indonesian sovereignty. The right to self-determination of the East Timorese people still exists. It is not negotiable. It must be exercised - and soon.

In recent declarations Ali Alatas has presented this "autonomy" proposal as the solution to the conflict. Has he abandoned his former arrogant claim, that "integration is something not to be discussed"? Does he not now replace it with the equally arrogant claim that autonomy is the only option to be discussed? Is this his way of cutting costs, while saving face?

Such a concept of autonomy sounds like a concession from a sovereign power which is allowing some devolution of power to one of its constituent parts. This is totally false. East Timor was militarily annexed by Indonesia, and is not part of Indonesia. The act of pseudo-legal integration that took place in May 1976 on a small bridgehead of conquered East Timorese land occurred at the very time that the majority of us were fighting against integration, as we are still are fighting it today. Indonesia is an invader, no more! Just as Iraq was in Kuwait. The East Timorese people are still waiting for, and demanding, the opportunity to choose their own political future. If Mr. Alatas was sincere about reform and devolution of power to the people, he would not speak for the East Timorese, but would let them speak for themselves.

Negotiations

Dialogue needs to be open and earnest, and oriented towards the possibility of reaching compromises that satisfy all parties. The joint communiqué issued on 5 August 1998 by the United Nations, Portugal and Indonesia, at the conclusion of the recent ministerial talks in New York, shows some positive steps in this direction.

I welcome the opening of "special interest sections" allowing for the presence of a Portuguese diplomat in Indonesia and vice-versa. The Indonesian government did not object, as they did previously, to the UN Secretary-General's consulting directly with East Timorese leaders. These are small steps forward.

Another important discussion point was the Intra-East Timorese Dialogue planned for October. It is right that Indonesia no longer forbids the discussion of the political status of the territory at this Dialogue, for this is in fact the very kernel of the problem. In addition, Indonesia should stop claiming that all Dialogue participants coming from Indonesia are pro-integration - they are not - while all those living abroad are anti-integration. Those taking part in the Dialogue should be greater in number, and also more representative of those East Timorese who live inside East Timor. The voice of East Timorese people living inside East Timor has not been heard. Most deserving of a voice are the youth, the spokespersons for the aspirations of today's East Timorese. Here is an important consulting role for Mr Jamsheed Marker, Mr Kofi Annan's Special Representative.

Referendum

There can be no genuine solution to the East Timor problem without a referendum. Is this not obvious? We demand this right of ours - a right denied to us for 23 years and ignored by the world - and we demand it vigorously. We will not be put off with compromises, such as autonomy. We will not be put off by delaying tactics, such as "wait for five years". This is not what we fought for. This is not what 200,000 of my brothers and sisters died for. Indonesia invaded our land. Indonesia must withdraw - unconditionally. Once gone, we will begin to build up a new East Timor.

If Indonesia does withdraw, as they are legally obliged to, then a referendum is in fact unnecessary. But let us hold a referendum, in order to show the world and particularly the Indonesians, the strength of our unity, and the intensity of our desire to be East Timorese. But that referendum must be held soon, as the youth of East Timorese so loudly demand. If we wait, who knows who the next Indonesian president may be? A general? Who will have the power to shift the Indonesian army out of East Timor when Indonesia regains its economic balance? Can we withstand, for ever, the "bribe and divide" strategy of the Indonesian army? Indeed can we trust the Indonesians at all? Their United Nations trusteeship of West Papua from 1963 to 1969 produced nothing less than a 100% unanimous vote for integration into Indonesia. Is this to be our fate if we wait?

Beware troop increases in East Timor

As a conciliatory gesture at the time of the ministerial talks, Mr Alatas pointed to Indonesia's reduction in Indonesian armed forces in East Timor. In August, journalists were flown to Dili at Indonesian government expense to watch and film 1,000 Indonesian troops - later reduced to 400 - boarding ships to return home to Indonesia. Later seen on television, this was the beginning of a large troop reduction program, said Mr Alatas. Ladies and gentlemen, do not believe it. It is a false claim which is completely in line with similar false claims that have been made by Indonesia since 1980. The truth is this. Since the filming of this thousand strong troop withdrawal, a total of 3,500 troops have taken their place. No cameramen were invited to watch their arrival, for they landed at secret army jetties at Viqueque, Com and Carabelo, near Vemasse. The world should be in no doubt that the concessions and reforms granted to Aceh, and the students of Jakarta, have no equivalent in East Timor. Fighting is continuing at this very moment, alongside repression and torture. The people have no peace - of body, far less of spirit. Not an inch of ground has been yielded by the Indonesians, not a single tangible concession. The fight continues, but we need, more than ever at this decisive point in our history, the influence and weight that the liberal democratic world can give.

Survival as a small country

Some of you may wonder how such a small territory as East Timor, with such formidable neighbours as Indonesia, can survive as an independent state. New Zealand seems to me a shining example of how this can be done. Over the years, your country has grown to become the most important power in the South Pacific.

The East Timorese can learn a lot from your experience. New Zealand's technical know how, its knowledge of the region, and its sensitivity to its original peoples, give it a key role in contributing valuable inputs and assistance to East Timorese reconstruction and development. Indeed, your country has already demonstrated its commitment to peace and harmony between nation states in the region, through the brokering of a Peace Agreement in Bougainville.

For these reasons, and because your country cannot be perceived as having any vested interest in the conflict, I do believe, that New Zealand is in a strong position to play a decisive peace-making role in negotiations to come. We invite you to do so. We also welcome the entry of New Zealand companies in the exploitation of our natural resources, and your expertise in helping to develop services and training in the huge task of nation-building which we hope lies not far round the corner.

An independent East Timor
So that you can see the shape of our small but independent Republic of East Timor on the horizon, may I give you five small insights?

First, East Timor will be a neighbourly country. A United Nations member, we will focus upon regional friendliness, with applications for membership with ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations), and the South Pacific Forum. Particularly will we foster strong ties with democratic New Zealand and Australia. The Portuguese speaking countries of Brazil, Mozambique, Angola and Portugal will always be our cultural neighbours.

Second, East Timor will be a democratic country. This means real democracy, not a one-party democracy, not a rigged democracy, but a multi-party democracy. Underlying this democracy, and essential to it, will be a judicial system which is independent of the government.

Third, East Timor will be a peace-promoting country. East Timor will have no armed forces, will ban the use of firearms within its borders, and vigorously promote reconciliation amongst its citizens, who have for years been forcibly divided by the Indonesian army.

Fourth, East Timor will be a developing country, eager to develop its oil and minerals, its farmland, its tree crops, its coffee, its cattle, its fisheries, and above all its tourist attractions.

Fifth, East Timor will be a country which cares for its people, and whose people are listened to. Its people will be educated, given back their health, and helped to gain employment and derive a livelihood from their land. The people's daily culture, and its many languages, will be valued and once again be handed back to the people, who originally were its guardians.

Conclusion
Ladies and Gentlemen! Friends of Justice and Peace!

Time has been on our side, but at a huge cost of life, misery and poverty. Time will also continue to be on our side, however, again this may mean more suffering and disablement. Armed brutality cannot destroy our spirit, or the feeling for our distinctive East Timorese identity. But I stress, this feeling is not for sale. Please therefore, take our vision for East Timor and our solution for peace, and then, if it is in your heart to do so, fight alongside us to realise it. Thank you.

Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão
President of the National Council of the Timorese Resistance (CNRT) 9 September 1998